

James Monroe Tomb  
Hollywood Cemetery  
Richmond  
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-843

HABS

VA

44. Rich

92

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

## JAMES MONROE'S TOMB

Location: Hollywood Cemetery (on a high point with a view of both the James River and the city), Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner: Commonwealth of Virginia

Present Use: Tomb of James Monroe

Statement of Significance: James Monroe, fifth President of the United States, died in New York City on July 4, 1831, and was buried in the New York City Marble Cemetery. In 1856 plans were proposed to erect a monument in memory of the late President in New York. At this time, Governor Henry A. Wise received a letter from the Governor of New York inquiring if Virginia, birthplace of Monroe, wished to have the body reinterred in the state. Two thousand dollars was voted by the Virginia State Legislature, and the body of Monroe was returned on the steamship "Jamestown", on loan from the Virginia Steamship Company, accompanied by the Seventh Regiment from New York. Impressive ceremonies were held in Richmond, highlighted by speeches from the Governors of New York and Virginia calling for national unity. The records of Hollywood Cemetery were burned in 1865, and as a result there are no specific records of Monroe's burial place and the monument.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1859.
2. Architect: Albert Lybrock, an Alsatian living in Richmond since 1852.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Commonwealth of Virginia.
4. Original plans and construction: Built by Wood and Perot of Philadelphia at a cost of \$1,682.
5. Alterations and additions: None.

## B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

James Monroe, 1758-1831, born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, served as fifth President of the United States from 1817-1825, a period known as the "era of good feeling." Monroe played a very prominent role in American history. In addition to the Presidency, he served in the American Revolution, studied law with Thomas Jefferson from 1780-83, and was a member of the Continental Congress, 1783-86. He practiced law in Virginia,

and was then elected United States Senator, 1790-94. From 1794 until 1796 he was United States Minister to France. He returned to Virginia to serve as governor from 1799 until 1802. In 1803, Monroe was again called upon to act as United States Minister to England. He was appointed U. S. Secretary of State by President Madison in 1811, and also served as U. S. Secretary of War from 1814 until 1815. James Monroe is best remembered for the Monroe Doctrine, 1823, whose principles were evolved by John Quincy Adams, then the U. S. Secretary of State.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: None.
2. Secondary and published sources:

Grand Civil and Military, in honor of the removal of the Remains of James Monroe from New York to Virginia.  
New York: Udolpho Wolfe, 1858.

Historical Sketch of Hollywood Cemetery, June 3, 1847 to July 10, 1889. Richmond: Baughman Stationery Company, 1893.

Rachal, William M. E. "President Monroe's Return to Virginia," Virginia Cavalcade, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Summer, 1953), pp. 43 ff.

Prepared by (Mrs.) Margaret T. Peters  
Researcher  
8 May 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The tomb represents the elaborate High Victorian Gothic style with a flamboyance possible only in iron work. Unlike the more expensive art of architecture, the relatively inexpensive tomb presented Lybrock with the opportunity to express the Gothic theme in a form of funeral sculpture with all the delicate tracery of the Perpendicular and Decorated styles of the English prototypes. It is significant that the iron was not cast in Richmond, the leading iron manufacturing city in the South, but was ordered from Philadelphia.
2. Condition of fabric: The surface of the cast iron has been layered with a gray-black paint and there are few rust spots.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Width, 130-1/2 feet; depth, 90 feet.
2. Foundations: Granite base.
3. Wall construction: Cast iron.
4. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Small access opening incorporated into design of west facade.
  - b. Windows: A lancet-arched screen of the Cathedral window type is used on all four facades with two flanking subordinate lancet arches included on the two long fronts. The central arch uses a form of rose window tracery at the top with three round arched openings below. The screen motif is flanked by collonettes at the corners which support small tabernacles rising above the facades.
5. Roof:

Shape and covering: Vaulted with ribbing and tracery in ogive curve with central three-tiered finial. No covering. Iron cresting runs along top of screen.

C. Description of Interior:

Ground Plan: A simple granite sarcophagus, approximately twenty-eight inches high, rests on a twenty-four-inch-high base.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The tomb is placed on a bluff overlooking the James River and is surrounded by many other smaller monuments erected in Hollywood Cemetery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. President John Tyler's tall obelisk monument stands a few feet south of Monroe's Tomb. The main fronts of the tomb face northeast and southwest.
2. Enclosures: A low stone wall, which rises in places to no more than two feet, inscribes a circle around the tomb.
3. Walks: Three interruptions in the low stone wall indicate access to the area.
4. Landscaping: Planting in this particular area is limited to grass.

Prepared by Tucker H. Hill  
Architectural Historian  
Virginia Historic

Landmarks Commission  
8 May 1969

VA  
44-RICH  
92-

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the Richmond Photo-Data Project, undertaken in 1967 by HABS in cooperation with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. During the period from July, 1967 to October, 1969, records were made of 11 historic structures in Richmond. The project primarily recorded examples of the cast-iron commercial architecture for which the city is known, though other building types are also included.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. James W. Moody, Jr., Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, directed the operation in Richmond. Professor Paul Delaney of the University of Virginia School of Architecture assisted in the selection of subjects covered. Historical and architectural data were furnished by Messrs. Tucker Hill and Calder Loth, Architectural Historians of the Commission's staff. Photographer was Edward F. Heite, also on the staff of the Commission.

ADDENDUM TO:  
JAMES MONROE TOMB  
Hollywood Cemetery  
Richmond  
Independent City  
Virginia

HABS VA-843  
VA, 44-RICH, 92-

PHOTOGRAPHS

PAPER COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001